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SUBJECT: SEJM FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHIEF HERALDS FURTHER POLISH
GAINS AT EU LEVEL

Classified By: Ambassador Victor Ashe for Reason 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) SUMMARY. Krzysztof Lisek, Chairman of the Sejm Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC), told the Ambassador that he and other Civic Platform (PO) candidates would do well in the June Euro Parliamentary elections, leading to a consolidation of Polish Euro deputies among fewer parties. That consolidation should give further impetus to Poland's growing influence within the EU -- Polish deputies will make up the second largest national delegation within the European People's Party -- and provide the inside track on high-level EU positions. In Lisek's view, former Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek has an excellent shot at becoming President of the European Parliament. He confided that PM Tusk plans to put Janusz Lewandowski forward as Poland's candidate for Commissioner of a key directorate. END SUMMARY.

CONSOLIDATING POLISH INFLUENCE WITHIN THE EPP

12. (C) Lisek told the Ambassador April 24 that he has a comfortable lead in the polls for a seat from the Olsztyn district in the June European Parliamentary elections, far ahead of Law and Justice (PiS) pit bull Jacek Kurski. The 41-year-old Lisek mused that many consider a stint in the Euro Parliament to be "retirement," but noted that much of the Polish Parliament's foreign affairs leadership will make the same migration, including Lisek's predecessor as FAC Chairman, Pawel Zalewski. (NB: Zalewski, a former PiS member once closely affiliated with Jaroslaw Kaczynski, is currently an independent, but told us separately he will be number two on Civic Platform's Warsaw list for EP elections. Lisek confirmed it is only a matter of time before PO's governing council approves his membership application.)

13. (C) Lisek predicted that his party, Civic Platform (PO), would win half of the 50 available seats, and the only other Polish parties to meet the EU's five percent threshold would be PiS, the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), and the junior coalition partner Polish People's Party (PSL). He said this consolidation of Polish parties represented in the Euro Parliament would augment Polish influence: the PO's roughly 25 deputies in the European People's Party would give Poland the second largest national delegation within that grouping, after the German one.

14. (C) That leading role will bolster Poland's candidates for EU positions, Lisek said. Former Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek has an excellent chance at becoming the President of the Euro Parliament, and Janusz Lewandowski (PO), who has served as the Euro Parliament's Budget Committee Chairman, could qualify as Commissioner for the Budget, Infrastructure, or Competition. Lisek suggested that the Budget Commissioner is only important at seven year intervals, and emphasized that the GoP would prefer a directorate where Lewandowski can help determine how funds are spent, rather than budgeted.

POLISH MASTERY OF EU LEVERS IMPRESSING THE RUSSIANS

15. (C) When asked if the Poles are becoming more effective at lobbying and influencing the EU, Lisek replied, "Ask the Russians." He maintained that many of his Russian contacts express surprise and concern that Poland has learned so quickly how to work the EU. He suggested that the GoR's recent willingness to take part in a series of high-level, bilateral meetings is an acknowledgment of the growing Polish role within the EU.

POLISH-GERMAN CONSULTATIONS

16. (C) Turning to Polish-German relations, Lisek noted that bilateral parliamentary leaders met March 25, and mainly discussed the EU's Eastern Partnership Initiative and energy. Bilateral differences over the Russian-German Nordstream pipeline project are easing, now that the project's chances are waning. According to Lisek, during a recent conference on Nordstream in Sweden, the chair of the Bundestag's Foreign Affairs Committee (Ruprecht Polenz, CDU), spoke out against the pipeline, much to the chagrin of the German Ambassador, who represents the SPD-controlled MFA. Lisek said that former Polish Foreign Minister Anna Fotyga damaged her chances as a nominee for Poland's Ambassador to the UN by expressing publicly Poland's opposition to a permanent German seat on the UN Security Council (in addition to criticizing overall Polish foreign policy).

17. (C) COMMENT: Lisek is often described as a young protege of Prime Minister Tusk, who shares Tusk's origins in Gdansk. Although a fast-riser like Lisek may have reservations about "retiring" to the Euro Parliament, the PO -- like Poland's other major parties -- is intent on running

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big-name candidates to increase turnout and drum up public support.
ASHE